



**WESTERN RIVERS
CONSERVANCY**

www.westernrivers.org

OUR MISSION

Western Rivers Conservancy acts to protect outstanding river ecosystems in the western United States.

We acquire land to conserve critical habitat, provide public access for compatible use and enjoyment, and cooperate with other agencies and organizations to secure the health of whole ecosystems.

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The River Protection Fund

Many people expect to update their wills soon when the federal estate tax rules are settled.

Please remember Western Rivers Conservancy in your planning. We dedicate legacy gifts to the **River Protection Fund**, our revolving fund for land acquisition, where they will be utilized time and again to protect the great rivers of the West.

Questions? Call Don Elder at 503-241-0151 Ext. 26 or email delder@westernrivers.org

Introducing our New Intern

We are excited to welcome Kelly Kay to our staff as Communications and Administration Intern.

Kelly most recently worked with one of our partner organizations, the Columbia Land Trust, where she coordinated outreach and volunteer efforts.

A native of San Diego, Kelly graduated from Lewis and Clark College in Portland with a degree in Environmental Studies. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, cooking and being outdoors.

She is already making an important contribution to our office. Welcome, Kelly!



Thank you for your support!

We'd like to thank the generous individuals, foundations, businesses and organizations that make our work possible. Recent gifts are listed below.

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RIVERLANDS

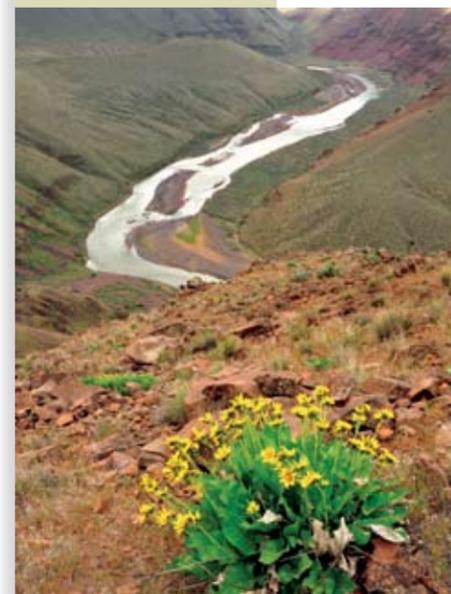
NEWS FROM WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY

Issue 21

Fall 2010



Land acquisition is the critical first step for one of the most restorable tidal marshlands in California.



Balsamroot blooms in the lower John Day canyon.

Victory for the Eel River Estuary

CALIFORNIA'S NORTH COAST

Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) is thrilled to announce that the Riverside Ranch property is being conveyed to the California Department of Fish and Game Wildlife Conservation Board for permanent stewardship.

The 440-acre property, which WRC purchased in 2007, is prized for its location on the Salt River, a critical piece of the Eel River delta. Land acquisition will enable restoration of habitat for 30 fish species that use the estuary as a feeding, spawning and nursery area.

Historically, the Eel River was amongst the region's strongest fisheries, and the property has been identified as one of the most restorable tidal marshlands in California. The former dairy farm will have levees and tide gates removed, allowing the tidal marshland to once again take over. Regular tidal washings will help to restore normal hydrological conditions along two miles of the Salt River frontage, preventing over-sedimentation that smothers habitat. The project will provide rearing habitat for coho and Chinook salmon, cutthroat trout and the endangered tidewater goby. Additionally, shorebirds and migratory waterfowl will benefit from renewed nesting habitat.

We eagerly await the restoration efforts ahead, in partnership with the California Department of Fish and Game, Humboldt County Resource Conservation District, California Coastal Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, Wildlands Conservancy, Natural Resources Conservation Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. ■

State Park Takes Shape on John Day River

GOVERNOR KULONGOSKI VISITS

Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski visited our John Day River project in October as the state moves forward with plans for the grand opening of Cottonwood Canyon State Park by 2013.

"This new park will highlight one of Oregon's treasures – the John Day River," Governor Ted Kulongoski said. "In touring the beauty of this land, the river, streams and the wildlife I know this will become a unique recreational resource place for all Oregonians and our visitors to enjoy today and for generations."

Western Rivers Conservancy purchased the 8,114-acre ranch, together with its 8,000-acre BLM grazing lease, in 2008.



Governor Kulongoski, pictured with WRC's Sue Doroff, visits the property in October.

Our goal was to protect this significant stretch of the John Day River, one of the great, free-flowing salmon and steelhead rivers of the West.

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Alsea Bay Frontage Acquired

RESTORING A GREAT OREGON ESTUARY

We recently reported that Western Rivers Conservancy signed an agreement to purchase some of the last unprotected salt marsh fronting the Alsea River estuary near Waldport. On November 1, WRC bought this 287-acre property to complete an effort to restore some of the best coastal coho salmon habitat remaining in Oregon.

The land, which we purchased from Forest Capital Partners, straddles Drift Creek and the North Channel of the Alsea River, a brackish area with eelgrass beds and unusually large areas of high-quality salt marsh in excellent condition. This area provides vital nursery habitat for coho and other anadromous fish, as well as spawning habitat for marine species.

The property will merge with an adjacent 1,400 acres that WRC protected in 2002 and become part of the Siuslaw National Forest.

Combining these properties will expand a large coho recovery effort that is already underway along the lower five miles of Drift Creek. Land acquisition enabled the Siuslaw National Forest and partners to remove dikes and plugs, reconnect side channels and restore native vegetation.

This acquisition is a top priority for protecting and restoring anadromous fish habitat in the Northwest. The result will be a dramatic improvement of habitat not only for coho, but for fall and spring Chinook, winter steelhead and coastal cutthroat trout. ■

Our most recent purchase fronts critical habitat along the North Channel of the Alsea River.

More Good News For Coastal Fish Recovery

OREGON MID-COAST STREAMS

Fisheries biologists working on Oregon's mid-Coast have reason to celebrate: Western Rivers Conservancy has committed to buy key properties on two streams that bring real hope to the recovery of the mid-Coast's salmon and steelhead.

First, Western Rivers Conservancy will purchase 520 acres along four miles of the North Fork Smith River, a salmon and steelhead stronghold for the large Umpqua River system. The Smith River's cold water and complex habitat provide a refuge for Umpqua River fish in summer months.

This is WRC's second acquisition on the North Fork Smith River. In 2003, we protected a private inholding of the Kentucky Falls Special Interest Area, a spectacular seven-mile-long corridor of old-growth forest in the Siuslaw National Forest.

Additionally, WRC will buy 478 acres along two miles of West Fork Indian Creek, a critical tributary to the Siuslaw River. The Siuslaw's fish runs have



declined, but West Fork Indian Creek maintains such a strong run of wild winter steelhead that it serves as a research site for this population. The land also contains rare riparian meadows that provide winter forage for a large herd of Roosevelt elk.

WRC is purchasing both tracts from Davidson Industries of Mapleton, Oregon, and is working to secure funding to convey them to the Siuslaw National Forest to be managed for fish and wildlife habitat while providing public access. ■



A great egret takes off from the project area.

First Phase Complete On Utah's Bear River

MIGRATORY BIRD REFUGE

On the edge of the Great Salt Lake, the marshes at the mouth of the Bear River are some of the top producers of waterfowl in the country.

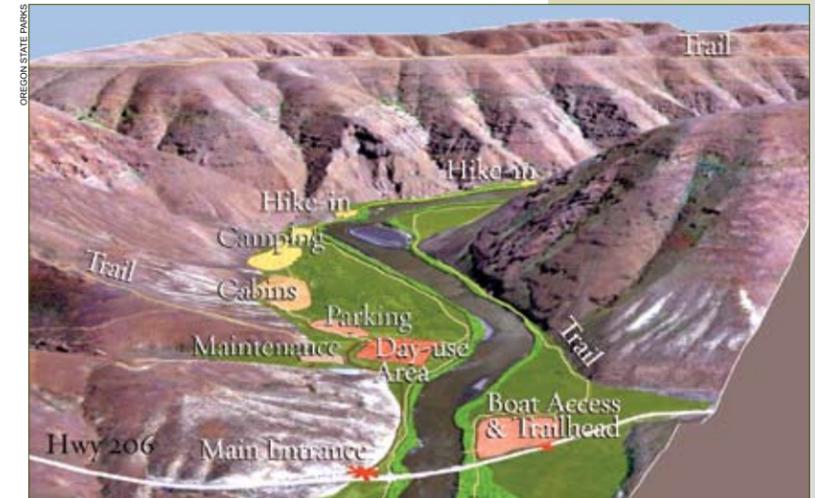
Here, Western Rivers Conservancy just completed protection of 696 acres of wetlands in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Friends of the Bear River Refuge.

We began acquiring this property, the former Feather and Finn Club, in 2008. Now, the entire ownership will become part of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge.

The acquisition includes rich wetland and riverfront habitat, as well as nesting and rearing areas used by species such as tundra swan, black-necked stilts, white pelicans and marbled godwits. WRC had previously conveyed 424 acres of this property to the Refuge, utilizing the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Now, we will complete the remainder, thanks to funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Migratory Bird Conservation Fund.

This is the first of several properties that Western Rivers Conservancy and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service hope to acquire in order to expand the 74,000-acre marshland complex that is preserved within the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge.

Set aside in 1929, the Refuge plays host to more than 200 species and millions of birds each year on their migratory journeys. More than 50,000 people visit each year to witness the phenomenal gathering and diversity of birds. ■



John Day River, Continued

Western Rivers Conservancy has conveyed the first 2,400 acres to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD), which will acquire the remainder of the property in the next biennium that begins in July 2011.

While holding the lands, WRC has undertaken an aggressive restoration program to address invasive species and recover sensitive steelhead habitat.

Meanwhile, the OPRD is soliciting public input to shape the park's master plan. Proposals include keeping select historic structures and barns to serve as reminders of the ranch's history. Camping areas and trails are slated, while the vast majority of the sagebrush steppe landscape will remain open and natural.

"We're receiving tremendous positive feedback to help us create a premier recreation experience that also protects the treasured ruggedness of this place," said Mark Davison, Oregon Parks and Recreation planner.

When Cottonwood Canyon State Park opens, it will serve as a place where runs of wild salmon and steelhead can thrive, and where hikers, anglers, hunters and visitors can experience the spectacular canyon.

Visit cottonwoodcanyon.wordpress.com or email cottonwood.canyon@state.or.us for more information and to submit comments for the planning process. ■

This graphic shows park ideas based on public meetings thus far.



Right to left: Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Director Roy Elicker, OPRD Director Tim Wood, Governor Kulongoski, WRC Executive Vice President Sue Doroff and Kulongoski's Natural Resource Advisor Suzanne Knapp.



West Fork Indian Creek is home to strong populations of steelhead.

Right: North Fork Smith River, a stronghold of the Umpqua River system.